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UNCLAS PARIS 05183

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 005183

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FROM USMISSION TO UNESCO PARIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [TPHY](#) [TSPA](#) [KISL](#) [SOCI](#) [XF](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: UNESCO: SESAME CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON CONTINUED MID EAST COOPERATION ON PARTICLE ACCELERATION PROJECT

11. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. The Council of the Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) convened for its eighth meeting at UNESCO Headquarters on July 10-11, 2006. The centerpiece of the program is a synchrotron light source, to be installed in Jordan, that will be the first in the Middle East and Southern Mediterranean. When fully operational, SESAME will be the Middle East's first major international center for co-operation in a field that offers many opportunities for training and research in basic and applied sciences, technology and medicine.

12. Much of the meeting focused on the progress being made toward having the SESAME facility up and running on schedule. There were updates on the building itself, the budget, and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). A special session with permanent delegates to UNESCO included a discussion on science in Muslim countries. A side conversation between mission representatives and SESAME Director Khaled Toukan, who is also the Jordanian Minister of Education, focused on ongoing high-level contacts between Jordanian officials and U.S. officials on SESAME.
END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

JORDANIAN MINISTER STRESSES SUPPORT FOR SESAME

13. In a conversation with Stanford University Professor Herman Winick, one of the founders of the SESAME project, and Khaled Toukan, Director of the SESAME project and Jordanian Minister of

Education, mission representatives were briefed on Toukan's recent meeting with Dr. John Marburger, the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. At this one-hour meeting in Amman, Dr. Marburger and Toukan discussed SESAME. Toukan also spoke of his meeting with Education Secretary Spellings in Sharm-el-Sheik two months ago, during which they also discussed SESAME. Toukan also cited Jordanian King Abdullah's meeting with Secretary Bodman, during which SESAME was also on the agenda.

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¶4. Winick then spoke separately to U.S. Mission to UNESCO Science officer and intern about the American Physical Society Conference he is organizing in Denver in March, that Toukan will attend. Winick would also like to organize a meeting in Washington, directly before or after the March conference, with Mr. Toukan, Dr. Marburger, Secretary Bodman, Ambassador Oliver and possibly others, to discuss

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SESAME.

UNESCO AND SESAME LEADERS SAY SESAME IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK

¶5. In the welcoming address, UNESCO Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences Walter Erdelen, praised the progress being made on SESAME, and pledged UNESCO's continuing support until SESAME could "fly with its own wings." After that, UNESCO and SESAME will work together as equal partners. In his remarks, SESAME Council President Herwig Schopper noted that Portugal was a new Observer to the Council (as is France) and that Japan will most likely join the council as an observer soon. Finally, he said that science would be an important element in bridging the gap between the developed and the developing worlds.

IAEA PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO SESAME

¶6. Jean-Pierre Cayol of the IAEA then spoke of the IAEA's assistance to SESAME. He highlighted a fellowships program arranged by IAEA that will allow for scientists from SESAME countries to have additional training. Cayol then spoke of progress on a Memorandum of Understanding that will set the framework for cooperation between the IAEA and SESAME. He also highlighted a new Inter-Regional project dedicated to SESAME, the "Support for Human Capacity Building in Utilization and Operation of the SESAME." This will allow SESAME members who are also members of the IAEA to benefit from training funded by the IAEA.

PROGRESS ON BUILDING IS GOOD, BUT MORE FUNDING IS NEEDED

¶7. SESAME Director (and Jordanian Education Minister) Khaled Toukan spoke of SESAME's progress. He stated that SESAME is 80% of the way to being fully functioning. The construction of the SESAME building in Jordan continues to go well; the building should be completed in November 2006, and staff members should be able to move in by March ¶2007. There is a delay in the beamlines; beamline commissioning will not be done until October 2010.

¶8. On a positive note, the Director then turned to the subject of scientific proposals. SESAME has so far received 70 scientific proposals from member states, observer states, and non-member states. Mr. Toukan especially noted the proposals from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, both non-member states, as a positive sign. Jordan and Israel have submitted the most proposals. There is one proposal from the U.S.

¶9. On funding, Mr. Toukan stated that while the Jordanian government will be willing to provide more funding, the SESAME Council would like the project to be multilateral, not national. In order for SESAME to be truly multilateral, funds need to come from sources other than Jordan. In order for SESAME to be operational by 2010, 15 million euros will be needed. Mr. Toukan urged member states to pay their dues in a timely manner. He then turned to the budget, noting that the budget for 2007 (\$2,825,000) is significantly larger than the budget for 2006 (\$1,122,086). This is because SESAME will be operating out of the main SESAME building in 2007, instead of out of the UNESCO field office in Amman, as it is now. There are currently 14 staff members, including technical staff, the directorate, and administrative staff. Member States approved the

2006 budget, and discussed the 2007 budget. The Council will decide whether or not to approve the 2007 budget in December of this year, at the next council meeting in Jordan.

¶10. Observer missions were briefed on a closed Session of member states and states that were on the interim council of SESAME. Member states concluded that the chairman of the Beamline Committee should rotate, and that a Pakistani will be the new chair, beginning in January 2007. They also discussed how to get more involvement from the European Union (EU) and concluded that they needed to make clear that SESAME is a regional, not a national, project. The Council called on observer missions from European states to convey this message to the European Commission.

SPECIAL SESSION DISCUSSES SESAME, SCIENCE IN ARAB WORLD

¶11. The program concluded with a special session with selected Permanent Delegations to UNESCO to inform them of SESAME's progress.

The information provided was a summary of the more detailed presentations given the day before in front of the Council. In addition, the Chair of the Beamlines Committee of SESAME, Samar Hasnain of the UK, gave a presentation on light source rings throughout the world, highlighting science's role in creating economic wealth. Professor Rahighi of Iran, Chair of the Training Committee of SESAME, talked of the training that had already taken place and that was to take place among SESAME scientists. In particular, he praised Winick's efforts to provide training to Middle Eastern scientists. While noting SESAME's success in attracting users and interest, he said there were not enough training programs to meet demand. Finally, Professor Schopper gave a presentation about scientific development in the Middle East, saying that while the Qu'ran promotes scientific understanding, the Arab world today neglects its scientists, causing the "brain drain."

He said that governments in the Islamic world need to change their attitude towards science, and begin financing scientific research. In the discussion that followed Schopper's presentation, both Palestinian and Jordanian representatives praised his ideas. The UK Ambassador to UNESCO stressed that the UNESCO Director General should lobby Middle Eastern states to begin funding scientific research. Oliver